THE AMERICAN NEGRO IN LITERATURE, ART AND LAW.

Paul Lawrence Dunbar, the Negro Poet, Writes of His Experiences in England's Social and Literary World.

Henry O. Tanner, the Negro Artist, Who Has Sold a Painting to the French Government.

Miss Lutie A. Lytle, the First Colored Woman Lawyer, Writes of Her Work and Her Professional Ideals.

"The Raising of Lazarus," Painted by Henry O. Tanner, the American Negro Artist, and Bought by the French Government for the Luxembourg Gallery. It Was the Feature of the Paris Salon, and Was Highly Regarded by the Critics, One of Whom Said Mr. Tanner's Style Closely Resembled That of Rembrandt.

To the Editor of the Journal:

SOME one, I do not know nor do I care who it is, has said that England is America, her language, people, customs and manners of dress being the same. The remark is striking on account of its very falseness and the evident lack of knowledge that prompted it. Despite whatever ties there may be of a common origin and a common tongue, the right little, tight little islander is very different from his cousin over here.

There is a certain ingenuousness about the Briton that the American can never justly lay claim to. He is frank and funny, but he never sees his own humor. An instance of this trait in the Britisher is that he opens his drinking places on Sunday immediately after the morning service. He is thrifty. There is no use in wasting time behind the bar when more than likely his customers are at church or chapel, but when the hour devoted to worship is past, then it is the publican's time. One may not take his glass on the way home from church. No, that were hardly decent.

But having once been home, if only for a second, the sanctity of the holy place is laid aside, and one may with propriety seek the "pub" and wash down the sermon with a glass of something strong. Nor is this English frankness less apparent in the conduct of respectable motherly women, many of them with gray hair and gentle faces, who think it nothing wrong to drink their Sunday bitters at the bar.

Indeed, this is the regular Sabbath afternoon diversion of the swell shop-keeper and his wife.

Shades of New England! The American holds up his hands in holy horror at all of this. But the Britisher argues thus, and not without some show of reason on his side: "We drink. We are not ashamed to have it known that we drink. Then why not do it honestly and openly?"

He laughs at Brother Jonathan when the latter looks with disfavor upon the employment of the barmaid. She is as much an English institution as the House of Lords or the Established Church, and is accepted equally as a matter of course. The young woman is usually pretty, neat as a pin and as bright as a new penny. She attracts customers and charms them into staying, for a pretty face and a witty tongue go well with a glass of wine.

The most insular Briton in the world cannot forgive anything like insularity in anybody else. But the humor of his attitude is all the keener because he is so blissfully unconscious that he is being funny at all.

I heard a story of Hall Caine which, while it is more likely to make one sneer than smile, yet serves to illustrate my point.

I happened, at a dinner one day, to remark that I lived a few doors from where the author of "The Christian" had been living. Now the name of Mr. Caine among a certain portion of London's literary set has the effect of producing broad and comprehensive smiles. They think he takes himself too seriously. On this occasion when the people began to smile about me I was afraid that I had said or done something foolish, but I soon understood.

A friend turned to me with what can only be designated as a grim, and said: "You would surely know it if you lived anywhere in a neighborhood where Hall Caine has been. He leaves an odor of greatness after him. I believe you made quite a lion of him in your country." I confessed my ignorance as to that fact.

"Well, it must be so," went on my companion, "for Caine says that after one of his lectures he stepped away, leaving a crowd of people hungry for a glimpse of him. 'I know they just wanted to stare at me,' said the novelist seriously, 'and I can imagine how greatly disappointed they were when I went.'" And the distinguished author combed out his locks with his fingers and sighed a vast sigh at his own greatness. It is so dangerous to be serious.

While the English were kind to me socially and made me thoroughly at home, I was often called upon to defend Americans in general, and in a few instances my own race. At an outing and dinner of the Whitefriars Club I met David Christie Murray, who was there gorgeous in a maroon velvet coat and white woollen trousers. His white hair, almost touching the collar of his coat, made him a rather picturesque personage. He is thoroughly pleasant and companionable and a good talker, but what was my surprise to hear him exclaim in the course of conversation: "But, sir, the negroes of America are not civilized. They all carry razors, and that's a relic of barbarism. I've been in the States and I know."

I could hardly reply for laughter, but I tried to explain that the assertion that all negroes carried razors was a relic of barberism; but though the Englishman dearly loves his pun, this perverse fictionist refused to see that the origin of the designation of the black man's national weapon lay in the fact that both in ante and post bellum days the razor was the implement which he wielded as an instrument of peace. First he was his master's valet, then from his ranks were recruited the majority of barbers. But no, Mr. Murray could not see.

Of the literary men whom I came to know, Mr. Zangwill struck me as the one with about the keenest sense of humor. He is a gentleman of the Jewish persuasion, with a large nose and a tendency toward epigram. His wit is sharp and incisive and he is famous for what, I am sorry to say, is a not quite printable retort to one of Hall Caine's platitudinal inflictions.

But even his notions of America and Americans are amusing on account of their strangeness. He thinks that we are a whole nation of people whose staple breakfast is pies. One doesn't know just when to take him seriously.

"You disappoint me," he said to me. "I want you to be different from any one I've ever come across; but you act like an Englishman or an American, or any one else."

"How did you want me to act?" I asked.

"Oh, I wanted you to—well—to go back to original perceptions, or to give me some insight into the traditions and ideas of the primitive black man. I wanted to know something of the old African's first ideas of God and how he looks at our present civilization. You look at it just as I do, but I wanted a different point of view."

"In short," I said, "what you wanted was an African savage who has never touched civilization giving his ideas on civilization. You wanted me with the standpoint of the jungles. You wanted a primitive man, with no idea beyond what nature in the crudest state had taught him, to tell you his feelings, experiences and impressions in literary England, didn't you? You wanted a paradox."

He smiled rather broadly and then said—his tones were very low and slow: "That's just exactly what I wanted, and I begin to see that I can't get it."

So many people have asked me how I felt to be accepted on equal footing by white people that I feel compelled to make some answer. In the first place, I was not overwhelmed. The white person to me was neither a god, a devil, nor a new species of human being. I had, here in America, grown up and gone to school with boys of the opposite race. I had visited their homes and they had been to mine. The only difference was that acceptance by a few did not mean the attitude of a whole people. This is not quite the only difference either, because I always think of the American white that he too often feels himself condescending when he takes a black into his home. This, of course, is not always the case, but it is too often so, and I resent his condescension.

With the Englishman it is a matter of course that you are judged as a man, and you feel little wonder or surprise at it. Perhaps your lungs do swell a bit to take in more of the freer air, but the great concern is to keep the same thing from happening to your head.

The Englishman is perfectly able to find the distinguishing points between a white and a black American, but he is not so successful when it comes to pointing out the difference between black or dark Americans themselves.

Early one evening, as I walked down Oxford street I found myself the centre of an admiring crowd. "That's him," said some one, pointing to me.

"I know it," said another, disdaining the proffered information, "I saw him once before, when he fought down at Birmingham."

Then I suddenly awakened to the real state of affairs and called a hansom and got away from my admirers. I found that I was bearing, vicariously, the laurels of Mr. Frank Craig, otherwise known as the "Harlem Coffee Cooler," who was in London with his pickaninny band and company of wing dancers, whom I in no wise resemble. That was the greatness that was thrust upon me, but I wished to rob no man of his glory, so I got away as well as I could.

PAUL LAWRENCE DUNBAR.

The American Negro Whose Poems Have Won for Him an International Fame, and Who Recently Returned to America After Being Lionized by English Society.

NEGRO WHO PAINTED A PICTURE FOR THE SALON.

AN American negro, Henry O. Tanner, has obtained the highest honor awarded in France to an artist. His picture in this year's Salon, "The Raising of Lazarus," has been purchased by the Government for the Luxembourg Gallery.

This distinction carries with it a gold medal and the privilege to the artist of having his pictures exhibited every year in the Salon without first submitting them to the Hanging Committee.

Mr. Tanner's picture proved the feature of the season's exhibition, and its rare intrinsic merit was the subject of much favorable comment by the critics and experts.

For years American artists have sought, and but few obtained, the honor. The conferring of the distinction upon Mr. Tanner marks a new era for the Afro-Americans, who have at last a worthy example to emulate.

Mr. Tanner is but thirty-eight years old. His father, who is still alive, is Bishop Benjamin Tucker Tanner, of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. After some time spent in Pittsburg, where his father was in charge of a church, young Tanner was brought to Philadelphia and began the study of art at the Academy of the Fine Arts.

His clever work soon brought him to the front, but he was sadly handicapped by the color line. Robert C. Ogden, the philanthropist, learned of young Tanner's undoubted ability, and encouraged him to persevere. So well did he fulfil the promise he early developed that before leaving the academy he was an acknowledged master in the art.

He continued his career without attracting any particular attention for some time, serving as instructor in the Clark University. The exhibition of his painting, "The Bagpipe Lesson," at the Academy of the Fine Arts was his first important public painting. The scene represents a pleasing outdoor picture with an old musician initiating an ambitious youth into the art of manpulating the bag of wind.

While on a visit down South he sketched an old negro character which he afterward transferred to canvas and named "The Banjo Lesson." The former picture is now exhibited at the Philadelphia store of John Wanamaker, and the latter is owned by the Hampton Institute of West Virginia.

About four years ago he decided to take up his residence in Paris, where there is no ostracism on account of color. Under the guidance of Constant, the great master, he rapidly developed his art and his first exhibit in the Salon was the "Sabot Maker," which was afterward exhibited in the Philadelphia Academy of the Fine Arts. His picture in the Salon of 1896 was "Daniel in the Lions' Den," which gained for the painter honorable mention. Last Winter it attracted considerable attention at the annual exhibition of fine arts, and many will remember the strikingly original conception of the familiar incident in the life of the "Jewish Prophet," the execution of which was both forcible and powerful. With the instincts of early religious training he again turned to the Scriptures for a subject for this year's exhibition and selected "The Raising of Lazarus," which gave him ample scope for his versatility, imagination and forcible conception. His effort was crowned with success and won for him the gold medal. It is this canvas that has been purchased by the Luxembourg Gallery.

Although Mr. Tanner paints religious subjects from preference, he has been successful in genre, portraiture and decoration. As a member of the American Academy of Arts, in Paris, he was selected to decorate the interior of the building, and was awarded a special prize for the success of his work.

"Perhaps no modern painter more resembles Rembrandt in style than Mr. Tanner," says a critic. "He is a painter of the modern school, a realist in expressiveness. He is strong in composition, but his drawing is at times weak. He is not a brilliant colorist, but he is wonderfully skilful in his treatment of light and shade. The dominant notes of his work are feeling, sincerity and dignity."

To the Editor of the Journal:

TOPEKA, Kan., Sept. 15.—I am not the first colored woman in America who has studied law, but I am the first to practise it. Miss Platt, of Chicago, was the pioneer of my race in the study of law, but she intended to acquire legal knowledge only as an assistance to her in stenographic work. I will practise and make it my life work. I may open an office in Topeka, but my ambition prompts me to begin practice either in New York or in Washington. Those who have taken an interest in me recommend New York.

I graduated from the Law Department of the Central Tennessee College on September 8, and was admitted to the bar by Judge Cooper, of Nashville, who, although a typical Southern gentleman, was kind enough to me to bid me Godspeed in my profession, and professed a hope and prophecy of my success.

My favorite is constitutional law, but I shall have no specialty. I like constitutional law because the anchor of my race is grounded on the Constitution, and whenever our privileges are taken away from us or curtailed, we must point to the Constitution as the Christian does to his Bible.

It is the great source and Magna Charta of our rights, and we must know it in order to defend the boon that has been given to us by its amendments. It is the certificate of our liberty and our equality before the law. Our citizenship is based on it, and hence I love it.

In the North the letter of the Constitution is better observed than in the South, but in the South the spirit of the Constitution is not dead: In the North the colored people are given all the privileges of spending money, but not of earning it. In the South the negroes are given the privilege of earning money, but not of spending it.

What I mean is this: In the South the white people give our people employment side by side with themselves in a most generous spirit, but they are not allowed to spend money side by side with them in the opera house, in the restaurant, in the street car, nor even in the saloon. In the North the people are niggardly in giving the colored people a chance to earn a dollar, and they are generous in allowing them to spend it, elbow to elbow with them at the theatre or anywhere else.

The South discriminates in punishment for violations of the law as between the Caucasian and the negro. If a poor negro is suspected of a capital crime he is immediately lynched; if a white man is convicted of the capital offence he is given a slight jail sentence. That is not right; both should be justly dealt with and punished equally severe.

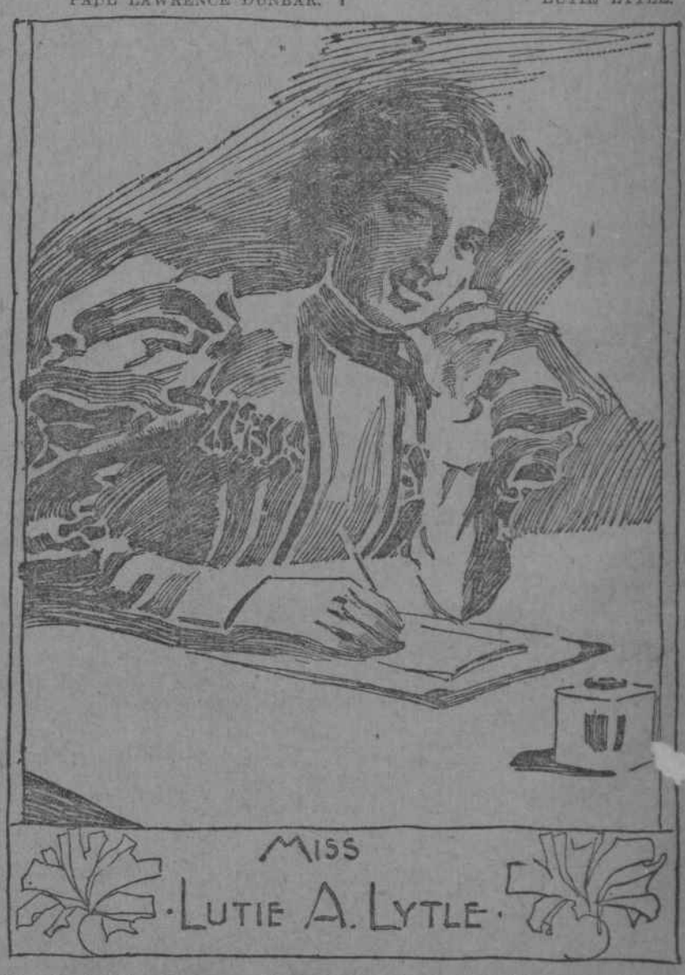
In connection with my law practice, I intend to give occasional lectures, but not in any sense for personal profit. I shall talk to my own peopleand make a sincere and earnest effort to improve their condition as citizens. I shall also talk to the white people and plead to them for fair play to my race. I am not a radical in anything, nor do I intend to be. I believe in efficacy of reason to bring about the best results.

I conceived the idea of studying law in a printing office, where I worked for years as a compositor. I read the newspaper exchanges a great deal and became impressed with the knowledge of the fact that my own people especially were the victims of legal ignorance. I resolved to fathom its depths and penetrate its mysteries and intricacies in hopes of being a benefit to my people. I very soon ascertained thata it was more deep and intricate than I first supposed it to be. It requires hard work to master it, if such a thing is possible at all. It is a great study and I am infatuated with it.

I have devoted some time to the study and cultivation of elocution and oratory, and I intend to improve myself in them.

Most respectfully,

LUTIE LYTLE.



The First Colored Woman Lawyer, Graduate of the Tennessee Central Law College, Recently Admitted to the Kansas Bar. She Has Opened a Law Office in Topeka.